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Looking Closer at St. Joseph this Advent **John Kinuthia**

Hey there. My name is John Kinuthia, and today I'm doing a presentation on St. Joseph, and how his life can inspire us to live a life of gratitude, a life of... faithfully alive. Before we dive into St. Joseph and his life, let's just say a quick prayer. *In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen. Hail Mary, full of grace. The Lord is with you. Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen. St. Joseph, pray for us. St. John Paul II, pray for us. In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

You know, once again, thank you for joining us on this online Pray More Advent Retreat and, as I just said, I'm doing a talk on St. Joseph, and I want to start by sharing a quick story about my grandmom. I remember one time we were having a conversation on how they named their children in the old days, old days in their life, and she was sharing about how she was able to name my dad "Joseph," and how that came about. And so we were listening, and she said... when my dad was born, my grandmom was on a mission, a hospital, a mission place, and some of the priests that were visiting and coming to give them a ward to receive the Eucharist, and to convert some of the people to Catholicism and Christianity.

They were talking to my grandmom, and then one asked her "What's the name you're going to give to your son?" And basically, in our culture, my grandmom told us that, then, they would just have names based on our heritage. They wouldn't have baptismal names. And so the missionaries, the priests, you know, started sharing with my grandmom about the saints, about St. Joseph, St. John, and all of these great people of the church. And my grandmom was really fascinated by St. Joseph, basically because they told her that he was a hard-working man, and he was the Father of Jesus.

So that name, that struck her, and she was like "Yeah, you know what? I want to name this boy 'Joseph,' Joseph, so that he can imitate St. Joseph, so that he can look at St. Joseph as his own father." Because at the same time when my dad was born, my grandpa died. So my grandmom thought, you know, if St. Joseph is the inspiration for my dad, he will turn out to be like him. And I heard that even other people, when they were naming people based on... when they were giving people names, there was this belief that when you get that name, you may end up being like that person. So if you're named after a rich person, then they say "I believe that he'll be a rich person." So, my grandmom giving my dad the name Joseph was just because he was the father of Jesus and he was a hard-working man, and she hoped my dad would end up being a hard-working man like Joseph. So that's how

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he got his Christian name. But anyway, we see the inspiration for my grandmom to give my dad the name Joseph, but there is more. There is more to St. Joseph than just being a hard-working man.

So, when you look in the scriptures, in the Gospel of Matthew from chapter 1, verse 18 to 25, we see how we're introduced to St. Joseph being a family man. We see him as a young man, being introduced to us as a young man and betrothed to Mother Mary, to the Blessed Virgin Mary, who... he was to take her to his home as his wife. And I heard one priest say that the way Joseph is introduced to our lives is a conflicted, is someone who has a conflict, internal conflict. And Joseph was a very internal individual. He loved to think through things from the inside.

So when he was betrothed to the Blessed Virgin Mary, and he found that Blessed Mary had a child, was carrying a child, he was you could say troubled inside. And he silently and quietly considered divorcing Virgin Mary, until such a time where we see him in a dream. He's resting, he's asleep, and in a dream an angel appears and says "Behold. Joseph, take Mary to be your wife, because the child she is carrying is of the Holy Spirit."

Let me pause here for a moment. I want to reflect on two things that are very important. Number one: Knowing St. Joseph was a father who was a master of an interior life. Knowing that his silence was not just a silence, it was an active way of listening to the Father, was an active way of saying "I'm open, Lord, and I want to hear Your voice." The master of an interior life, understanding in silence. But he did not let any negative voices influence and affect him. And all he thought, because he was a righteous man, was how to protect the Blessed Virgin Mary from shame. That tells us something, you know, tells us something. As people of God, we can learn from St. Joseph to quiet our mind, our heart, and our souls, and to rest in God's hands.

I read somewhere that because Joseph was able to hear the angel in the dream, it also meant that he was resting. You know, in regular circumstances, I would be disturbed, I would be restless if I find the woman that I love is pregnant and it's not my pregnancy, you know what I'm saying. It would be troubling. But in this case, Joseph was rested, he was at peace, and he was open to hear God's voice.

So, despite what is going on in our lives, all the turbulence, are we able to rest in God's hands? Are we able to say... to quiet ourselves and say "I'm going to rest, because I trust the Lord is leading me, and I trust the Lord will give me an answer." How well do we rest in the Lord? How well are we able to open ourselves up to Him and allow Him to work in us? St. Joseph wasn't just a quiet man, it was not just a passive silence - that he's not thinking about anything - but here we see

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he was listening to God, the Father. He was listening to instructions so that he could obey God's will.

And we see the angels saying "Behold, take Mary to be your wife." And he does that. So we see also Joseph is a man of action, and we are called to be people of action. And I know this is very... this is familiar to you, that we hear people have dreams, you know, people dream. "Dreaming is free," I've heard people say that. Dreaming is free, but the work itself is not. You have to sacrifice something. So Joseph wasn't just getting to dream, he wasn't just receiving this inspiration from the Father and sit down. No, he would get to work. Whatever he was told, he would obey, and I think this is a challenge to us. When we are really listening to the Father, when He tells us things to do, how well do we do them? Are we people of action? Are we people of action? Are we people who follow God's commandments? St. Joseph can lead us to Jesus. St. Joseph will lead us to Jesus, if I should say it like that. He is leading us to Jesus.

One time we were in a retreat, back in the year 2000, and there was one priest who was reflecting on the Blessed Virgin Mary and St. Joseph, trying to have a comparison on how they lead us to Jesus. And he said that when it comes to the Blessed Virgin Mary, when we are reciting the Rosary, every time we recite the Rosary, she prepares a bouquet of flowers that she takes to Jesus Christ, especially during Mass. If you say 10 Rosaries during the week before you go for Mass, the Blessed Virgin Mary prepares 10 bouquets of flowers and puts our intentions, prepared them so well that she presents them to Jesus during the Mass. On the other side, he said "When it comes to St. Joseph, when we seek his intercession, he looks into us, because he was a carpenter, he worked with his hands. He would take whatever is not good in us - our negativity, our bad attitude - he would chisel out whatever is not good out of us. Our hatred, chisel, chisel, chisel. And he would prepare us as a special gift carved by him to Jesus during the Mass.

So, when you go to church, you have St. Joseph and the Blessed Virgin Mary. And either one, whoever you go to, they lead you to Jesus Christ, and especially St. Joseph. And it sounds like St. Joseph's way of preparing the gift is a more painful one, right, because he's chiseling out, and carving and, you know, and ironing out, and sanding, and making sure that it would look good to be a gift for Jesus. I thought that that was very interesting and very fascinating as well. So I invite St. Joseph to carve me out, so that when he is presenting me to Jesus, I am that special gift. There are people who work with wood and can probably envision that, vision, have that vision of carving and everything.

So what's in your life that you need St. Joseph to come help you carve out? Is it restlessness? Is it not being able to quiet yourself like he did? Or is it being

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present? You know, in the current world, we are bombarded with so many things, we are required to do so much work, family, friends, we are all over the place. And St. Joseph can teach us to be present, because Joseph himself, during the time of Jesus and Mary, he was always present. He was always there. But the angel said “Flee and go to Egypt.” St. Joseph did as he was told. He was providing for them, he was taking care of them, he was fully present. And I think this is one of the things that I’m praying for me, you know, to St. Joseph to help me, to help me be present; when it comes to my family, be present; when it comes to my work, be present; wherever I am, I be present.

With the gadgets and the phones and everything, video games, I see this happening all the time even in hotels, where people are just constantly on the phone; in the schools, people are constantly on their phone; in elevators, phone. You cannot even ask somebody “Good morning,” or “How are you doing?” Their presence is occupied by something else, not their interactions. So I’m really praying and asking St. Joseph to help me out on being present, so that I can give my best. Because when you’re present, you’re able to hear God’s voice, and you’re able to obey. When you’re not present, when you’re just partly present, and your soul and your mind is not there, you cannot hear God’s voice. St. Joseph, with his... as a master of interior life, knew how to be present, and doing God’s will requires being present.

Something else that is very fascinating about St. Joseph and I thought I would share here: I always thought that St. Joseph was an old man until a talk when I was going for Opus Dei sessions said that St. Joseph was a young man, and he’s portrayed as a young man so that it can inspire us to preserve our purity. To be pure in mind, pure of heart, pure in the body. He’s presented as a young man so he can inspire us to take care. He took care of the Blessed Virgin Mary’s virginity, and was able to retain his purity and chastity.

So today’s call, my friend: What areas of your life do you need St. Joseph to come and touch? What areas of your life can St. Joseph come and help? Because he says “Come to me and I’ll help you. I will help you to get to Jesus. He’s a family man. So your family, invite St. Joseph to your family. And what better way to unite the Holy Family... to unite your family with the Holy Family than through St. Joseph? He says “Come to me with all your troubles, and I’ll present them to Jesus and the Blessed Mother, and all of us will team up.” Sometimes I think St. Joseph also shows us how not only to provide for our families, but also how to work together as a team, how Jesus likes.

So today, in this talk, or in this particular session, ask the Holy Spirit to guide you. Ask the Holy Spirit to come and help you identify those places that need chiseling

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out, so that when St. Joseph is presenting you to Jesus, you will be a masterpiece. By the end of it all, by the end of it all, St. Joseph presents us to Jesus, his Son, the Son of God, and our prayers and his intercession prepare us as a special gift for Jesus.

To recap, what we can learn from St. Joseph is being a master of our interior lives, being able to quiet our lives, being able to be present wherever we are, so that we can hear God's voice, to be present so that we can take care of those in need, to completely trust in God's providence, to completely trust that God is speaking in our lives, and obeying His will. So we ask St. Joseph to take our intentions, we ask St. Joseph to prepare us as a special gift to Jesus, especially this Christmastime that's coming up. So as we go see Jesus, as we welcome Jesus in our hearts, that we will be this beautiful masterpiece prepared by St. Joseph.

I hope that the viewpoints I've shared will help you and help someone else to be inspired by St. Joseph. As I close, let us just ask the Holy Spirit to guide us in our next sessions. *In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Thank You, Jesus, for this opportunity to share and to talk about St. Joseph. Thank You for the inspiration that he gives into us. He's our patron. Thank You for all of the additions of good things that he does in our lives. We surrender everything onto You. St. Joseph, come and intercede for us and inspire us. Blessed Virgin Mary, pray for us. St. John Paul II, pray for us. In the name of the Father, Son, and the Holy spirit. Amen.* Thank you.